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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y C A P T I O N
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TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV TU I2
SUBJECT: TURKISH ENVOY VISITING IRAQ TO IMPROVE
WIDE-RANGING BILATERAL TIES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 780
 1B. BAGHDAD 784
 1C. 07 BAGHDAD 666

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: Turkish Special Envoy to Iraq Murat Ozcelik told Ambassador March 20 that he will stay flexible with how long he remains in Iraq during this visit in the hopes of holding a meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani next week, which the GOT hopes to keep secret. Both agreed that President Talabani's March 7-8 visit to Ankara provided a significant window of opportunity to improve Turkey-Iraq relations. Ozcelik emphasized other areas of both GOT-U.S. and GOT-GOI cooperation, particularly in hydrocarbons. He signaled his intention to spend significantly more time in Iraq to both increase Turkey's understanding of domestic developments and further improve overall relations, which he said had "reached a turning point." During this visit, which will last at least through March 25 and probably longer, he will travel to Basra, Ninewa and Dohuk.

Ambassador emphasized the importance of Turkey asserting a more active and visible presence in Iraq. Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Derya Kanbay, Turkish DCM (and Basra Consul-designate) Ahmet Yazal and Political-Military Minister-Counselor Marcie Ries also joined the meeting. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ozcelik said the visit of President Talabani to Ankara March 7-8 was positive; the meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan was particularly useful. He noted that the visit represents a turning point of which both sides should take advantage, with lots of follow-up that requires quick movement to continue momentum. This includes work on a plan to counter the PKK. Ozcelik also pointed to TNIO Taner's efforts (ref a) as useful and said he planned to cooperate closely with his initiative.

¶3. (C) Turning to broader topics, Ozcelik emphasized that he hopes to accelerate economic cooperation with Iraq and work closely with the U.S., particularly on hydrocarbons and energy security. He noted he had met EUR DAS Matt Bryza and that he would like to see increased cooperation between U.S. and Turkish companies on investment in Iraq. Ozcelik said Turkey planned to step up official visits to Iraq, to include a visit in April by Turkish MFA U/S Apakan and probably a visit soon after by the Turkish Minister of Industry and Trade. He characterized military cooperation between Turkey and Iraq as another avenue that was developing well, noting that "we have to assist the overall Iraq situation to the fullest extent." He said he intended to come to Iraq more often and stay longer each visit.

¶4. (S) Ambassador responded that the U.S. is delighted about

the GOT moving forward on opening up a consulate in Basra. The regional dimension in Iraq is very important; the Arab countries have been largely absent until the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) meeting held in Erbil March 11-13 (ref b), which has left the field to the Iranians. Ambassador emphasized Turkey should assert a more active, visible presence in Iraq.

¶15. (C) Ozcelik said that he needed to "get smarter" on Iraqi domestic politics. He said he talked to Sadi al Mutlaq in Amman, who told Ozcelik that he wanted to return to Iraq but he had a problem with Vice President Hashimi. Ozcelik posited that VP Hashimi seems to be "losing ground," even as the U.S. and Turkey both support him. Ozcelik acknowledged that the GOT's ability to develop relations with the Shia factions is a bit more difficult. He repeated that U.S.-Turkish objectives are the same in Iraq.

¶16. (C) Ambassador returned to the Talabani visit, noting it was the right decision for him to go; last minute warnings that he would not be received appropriately proved untrue. Talabani was, in fact, quite pleased with the visit both from the perspective of substance and of protocol. He stressed that the possibility of Ozcelik meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani is extremely important. Ambassador said that KRG President Masood Barzani was also very positive about the Talabani visit. Intra-Kurdish relations between them are good now; the APU conference helped make the Kurds feel more integrated into Iraq. The Ambassador suggested that it would be useful reactivate the trilateral mechanism and urged GOT to re-engage in discussions on the closure of Makhmour refugee camp. On hydrocarbons, Ambassador said he hoped that Turkish companies had avoided doing deals with the KRG, as the Kurds have been working against their own interest by signing such contracts. Ozcelik admitted that two small Turkish companies

had signed deals. (NOTE: Turkish owned Genel Enerji formed a joint venture with Addax Petroleum to develop part of the Taq Taq area under a production sharing agreement with the KRG. See ref c. END NOTE.) Ambassador said Council of Representatives (COR) Speaker Mashadani told us he plans to schedule a first reading of the hydrocarbons law soon, opining that while it may cause controversy, it would be a good thing. He urged Ozcelik to step up engagement, particularly with Sunni Arabs, who need to feel their interest.

¶17. (C) Regarding the Turkmen boycott of the Kirkuk Provincial Council (PC), Ozcelik said the Turkmen feel that they are under pressure from both Arabs and Kurds now to return. The pressure from the Arabs may actually produce more natural cooperation with the Kurds, Ozcelik suggested. On Article 140, Ozcelik said that Sunni Arabs are against its implementation and that he suspects Talabani and Barzani have decided to do a deal on Mosul.

¶18. (S/NF) Returning to PKK-specific issues, the Special Envoy agreed that meeting with KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani will be "very important." Ozcelik continued that to make these initiatives succeed, "if we are not on the same page, we will have problems." He said that if GOT PM Advisor Ahmet Davutoglu decides to travel to Baghdad to also meet with Barzani, he wants to hold a separate meeting with him. He said that the GOT is keen on keeping the meeting(s) secret for now. He confided that he met recently with Turkish General Staff LTG Huseyin Nusret Tasdeler (J3, operations) and told Tasdeler that the TGS must learn how to differentiate between its issues with the AKP ruling party government and Turkey's national interest.

¶19. (C) Pressed by the Ambassador on Mahkmour, Ozcelik said it would be better to make some progress on other things before attempting to tackle this issue. It would not be wise to begin with something which could fail.

¶10. (C) Ozcelik raised again hydrocarbons, noting the issue

of natural gas going to Syria rather than through Turkey and his intention to meet with GOI Minister of Oil Shahristani to discuss issues related to the Taq Taq field, among others. He also said he plans to travel back to Turkey through Dohuk province in the KRG, where he will meet with the Dohuk Governor.

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